

this context, Paredes' book is excellent, one which should be read by anyone interested in a literary view of Mexican-American life in the lower Rio Grande Valley from the time of the Mexican Revolution (1910) to the beginning of the Second World War. It is a straight-forward account of the title figure's coming of age. Along the way, the reader sees a loving family, a dreadful and prejudiced educational system, and a unique social/political system based principally on race. It is written in five parts, with the first four dealing with the protagonist's family background, his early years, his grappling with the burden of living up to his dead father's expectations, and the problem of his name and all the social and cultural baggage attached to it.

This is a first-rate novel, but there is a serious flaw in the fifth chapter, "Leader of His People," where the reader is completely unprepared for the jolting reversal regarding the title figure. George Washington Gómez in the last twenty-two pages is not the same person the author spent the rest of the book defining and describing, and the last pages seem to be only slightly connected to the rest of the novel. There is a great deal missing between the time "Gualinto" heads off to college at the end of part IV, and his return in part V as a counter-intelligence officer in the U.S. Army. Hinojosa is entirely accurate in calling it "a first draft of a work set against the Great Depression, the onset of World War II in Europe, and set also against the over 100-year-old conflict of cultures in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas."

In spite of the ending, *George Washington Gómez* has a great deal to offer the reader. For the first 280 pages, this is a well-written, thoughtful, intelligent, and engaging work which, had it been published in the early 1940s, would have been proclaimed as the "first" modern Chicano novel. Instead, that honor usually goes to *Pocho*, published in 1959 by José Antonio Villarreal. Paredes provides a much better portrait of a young man as he grows toward maturity in a bi-cultural society than does Villarreal, and *George Washington Gómez* is much more skillfully written and constructed. It is a significant contribution to the large and frequently neglected body of Chicano literature written prior to the mid-1960s.

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**Frank R. Parker. *Black Votes Count: Empowerment in Mississippi After 1965*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990) 254 pp., \$12.95 paper.**

From a broad perspective, Parker discusses the political impact of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Thus, as he notes in his opening comments, "Since 1965 America has witnessed a renaissance of black participation" in the political process. His central focus is on the impact it had on the state of Mississippi. Throughout his discussion he examines the court challenges

directed at forcing the various southern states to live up to the 14th and 15th amendments to the Constitution. The Voting Rights Act of 1965, however, symbolizes local grass roots pressures taken in concert with legal challenges and thus highlights a multipronged approach to democratizing the South and ultimately the rest of the country. It is, as Parker points out in his conclusion, an ongoing struggle.

In this reviewer's opinion, some of Parker's concluding remarks in Chapter Seven seem overly optimistic about the prospects for pushing ahead along the civil rights front. For one thing Reagan's support of the 1982 Voting Rights Act was grudgingly given and under enormous pressure. There is no credible evidence that the current administration is committed to much more than grand stand gestures in the area of civil rights or related fields. Whether the election of more blacks to office will have positive effects on U.S. politics depends on a number of factors, for example, what kind of political currents emerge within the black community by the end of this century, what kind of coalitions African Americans can build with other groups, and, the future ideological direction that this country takes in the near future. While events of the past decade are not totally negative, there are some danger signals not sufficiently noted in Parker's analysis. Racism and neo-fascism are not on the decline but still pose a threat to our country. The present composition of the Supreme Court does not bode well for African Americans or many other groups. In fact there seems to be a pressing need to fight to protect the gains made over the last thirty years. In short, we seem to be in a period of retrenchment, and how long it will last will depend on how well we learn from the past and whether enough people can be mobilized at the grass roots level.

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**David Pilgrim. *Race Relations "Above the Veil": Speeches, Essays, and other Writings.* (Bristol, IN: Wyndham Hall Press, 1989) v, 255 pp., \$14.95 paper.**

This is mostly a collection of speeches delivered to high school and college students by Pilgrim, who teaches sociology at Saint Mary's College/Notre Dame. A few of the talks were given to community and business groups in several Midwestern states, and thus each selection reflects the appropriate style and content level of the audience being addressed. The content of all the pieces, including the few essays and short stories, focuses on racial prejudice, but also deals with general biases pertaining to gender, ethnic group, and class.

From the effective ways the speeches are constructed, there is no doubt that Pilgrim is a forceful instructional speaker. The fact that he has given